

Off-Form Wycombe Save Point With A "Freak" Goal!

By ARGUS
Wycombe Wanderers 1,
Woking 1

IF any Watford "spy" left Loakes Park on Saturday with cocky stride and confident smile, dreaming of the slaughter of the innocents, let him quickly be assured of one important point—Wycombe Wanderers will not and could not play as badly as this again.

It is just as well that unpredictable Wanderers got this sad game out of their system seven days before the cup-tie.

Tomorrow the Wycombe boys may play refreshed. On Saturday, alas, they were right down to Woking's level and, with all due respect to Charlie Mortimore's struggling team, that was far from good.

SLEEPY SOCCER

Perhaps too many thoughts were at Vicarage-road—for this was sleepy-time football with the Wanderers fluttering through the Woking defence from time to time and then dozing away goal chances as if they were ten goals up instead of being held to 0-0 until 55 minutes and then, absurdly, one goal down.

It took a perspiring, taut finish by a galvanised Wycombe to snatch even a point from a game they should have had buttoned up by four to five goals at half-time. The indignity of trailing a goal whipped some belated urgency into the home forwards.

Until Michael Rockell scored his 80th minute equaliser, with a freak centre which caught goalkeeper John Burley standing on his line like an Epstein statue, the confidence had oozed out of the Wanderers' play.

OUT-OF-TOUCH

The whole team seemed smitten with an inability to pass the ball crisply and accurately. Even Ron Fryer, usually so delicate and precise with his distribution, had the look of a man who was out-of-touch, and when that happens something is pretty seriously wrong.

Of the forwards, only Paul Bates had a reasonably good game—but even he was afflicted by the goal gremlins when he came to shooting. Cliff Trott, needless to say, was a prodigious worker but Ray Howson, who could not put a boot right for some fans, and wing men Michael Rockell and Jack Tomlin, will wish a short memory of this affair.

With kind-hearted full-back Reg Taylor giving Tomlin the freedom of Loakes Park, the majority of Wycombe's attacks funnelled up the left wing. Unfortunately for Wycombe, Jack was as astray with his shooting as everybody else and what should have been a major Wycombe advantage was frittered away.

WOKING GHOST

Matter-of-fact Woking, a ghost of the fine team which graced the Isthmian League a few years ago, were frantically hoping for distinguished veteran Charlie Mortimore to pull something out of the fire.

Winger Mortimore often made Jimmy Moring wear a "where's Charlie" look, but his fellow forwards seemed just as unlikely to find the net as the Wycombe men.

All the early play favoured Wycombe and it was 23 minutes before a somewhat uneasy Dennis

Syrett had his first positive shot to deal with.

Wycombe should have been goals to the good by this time. Jack Tomlin just failed to convert a glorious pass from Bates, after the centre-forward had puzzled the Woking defence by wandering onto the left wing.

DRAMATIC MISS

Then came the first of the game's two most dramatic misses. Bates, who had Woking dizzy with perplexity, sent Tomlin scurrying away but when the centre came flashing across, Ray Howson failed to get in a crack at an inviting goal.

More Wanderers' misses and then Woking surprised everybody by scoring. Referee C. A. R. Woan disallowed the "goal" for offside. Even so, Wycombe were stirred to retaliate and Trott was unlucky to find Burley perfectly positioned to take his goalbound header to end a fine Wycombe movement.

Before the break, Woking had another score ruled out, for a foul, and Rockell had a spectacular miss when he shot at the goalkeeper from little more than a yard range and then turned the rebound the wrong side of a goalpost.

BECK NETS

It is impossible to keep John Beck out of the goal news. John, hero of the winning goal against Dulwich Hamlet, was a victim on Saturday. As Woking inside-right John Hebdon beat Syrett to the ball and squared across goal, ten minutes after the interval, Beck did a jig of despair on the Wycombe goal-line as he turned the ball into his own net.

Wycombe went all out for the equaliser. Bates juggled the ball down beautifully in the Woking penalty area and Burley had to drive hard to save. Energetic Jimmy Truett sparked off another likely raid which ended in Tomlin firing wide and then Bates did likewise, putting hands to head in alarm after billowing a fierce left footer right off course.

Rockell's equaliser took some of the desperation out of the Wanderers' play and Bates, at his liveliest, beat goalkeeper and centre half with enchanting ease before being robbed at the last second. But on this showing, a draw was probably as much as Wycombe deserved.